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It wasn't the whole west side of Chicago that was in flames. Just part of it, mostly the old twenty fourth ward, but it scared the hell out of the city. The flames from the burning stores could be seen from the high rises along the lake. In their fantasies whites imagined the confrontation spreading with black insurgent bands taking fire into bordering white neighborhoods or the loop.

The heart of the black community on the south side didn't go up but ~~no~~ the old established black families weren't sure it wouldn't. The South Side wasn't the west side.

The south side had been a black community for 80 years.

The west side had been black for barely thirty, turning from white to black in a speedy transition as the Jews abandoned it like a flight of crows. Once the cultural center of the whole midwest Jewish population and the center of cultural, business, health and social life among the immigrants, the second generation children of immigrants, moved out of the crowded but adequate apartments and scattering of single and double houses

of North Lawndale and into the modern respectable and
 with their arrival affluent north side. They left in
 the nick of time and in doing so took a generation of
 heat off of Chicago. The black population was exploding
 with no place to go. There was a housing shortage for
 everyone after the war and the black community was surrounded
 by nationality communities with enough vitality and
 strength to resist the block busters and the ~~crime~~
 black crime and the reciet new residences among the
 refugees and displaced persons Hitlers bestiality had left
 tragically scattered over Europe. But when the older
 generation of jewsih immigrants fromt the 1910s died
 or went to live ~~in~~ with their children ~~and~~ in the
 fashionablenew neighborhoods it opened up room for
 over a 100,000 blacks on the west side. It also presented
 them with a shopping center, thriving mo and pa storres
 the Income from which had educatâd a large portion of
 Jewish doctors, lawyers dentists musicians and interllectuals.

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as well as the skeleton of a political organization
once the most powerful in the country. ~~At~~ It wasn't
that the Jews had fled the blacks. There had been a small
west side Black community for years, who had Jewish
friends and whom many Jews counted as close and best friends.
It was an age thing. Large numbers of Jews, mostly Polish
and Russian had come in a very short time, They had
prospered and when the old Jewish population died
or grew old their children moved out. It was a quick
transition for those going as well as those arriving.
Blacks inherited all of the equipment ^{of a} ~~for~~ a great community.
But they didn't know how to use it. A community isn't buildings.
~~It's~~ A community is experience. Historic experience that
has endured, been reconciled, shared, exalted, dramatized,
allegorized. Whatever it is blacks didn't have it. It is
still evolving. The flames that lit up the Chicago
skyline were not the flames of bitterness. They were
the flames of mischief and greed, of vandalism, of
disorder and disorganization, of stupidity and human

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opportunism. The bitterness and frustration was in the hearts of blacks who never hit the streets, men and women who huddled behind locked doors ~~as they did~~ in darkened houses, as they did many nights, hoping violence would pass over them, feeling tragic in the knowledge they had no power to stop it. With no blood of the lamb to splash over their mantel, they knew the violence could very well strike them. The looters and arsonists on the street were for the most part the ordinary run of vandals, petty thieves, and underclass but the fires they set had no more judgement than those who started them and they both terrified not only the whites from their distant towers, but the respectable and struggling blacks who were trying to hold their families together, and hang on to their t.v. radios, clothing lamps beds etc and their lives.

When the burning and looting showed no sign of letting up and even increased in intensity several ~~men~~ black members of my staff who were required to take positions in the riot torn areas and to pass on ~~what~~ information they had to a hastily assembled information center downtown asked to be relieved to try to stand guard or help move members of their families from ^{where they lived} apartments over the stores in the threatened area or help guard their families in cottages and apartment houses in the nearby neighborhoods. I approved the requests and went to see the Mayor. He was in his office alone and looked very despondent. I reported such facts as I had and the impressions of my staff which included the impression that thousands of poor people living in the buildings on the west side were near to panic, afraid for their lives. He asked me what I would suggest he do. I told he try to use enough force to stop the looting and rioting. Who could he talk to. I told him to talk to as many black leaders as he could to reassure him but not to assume that any of them could

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stop the rioting. Third, he asked me why are they burning down their own communities, their own city. This hurt him most of all and most puzzled him. I said "they aren't". Bums, delinquents, vandals, cheap opportunistic scavengers are burning down these neighborhoods and its an unfortunate fact that this part of town and the black population has a larger number of this class of people than others. The mayor didn't ask me why. Its just as well. It would have been the wrong time to try to tell him why I thought so. Besides the liberal press the sociologists were all mouthing "the common knowledge" alienation, powerlessness, frustration, unemployment housing segregation. When the Mayor, the next morning told the police to "shoot (arsonists) to kill", it had a salutary effect although the order was never issued and ~~the~~ nobody was actually shot. A howl went up from liberals and tender hearted people all over and added immeasurably to the Mayors reputation as a brutal man with a neanderthal mentality. Conferences were called

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with scores of black leaders especially of the ministerial variety. It had a calming effect and a few actually hit the streets to talk with the people, but for the most part they didn't find anybody they knew to talk to.

Driving back from the flaming riot area by a round about route it was noticeable that ⁱⁿ fire station after fire station, the sparkling red and white fire engines sat alertly undisturbed, Just as it was noticeable that the riot areas were not overrun with police. They had all gone in at the beginning and been assaulted with rocks and bottles and a few shots. Police ~~and~~ were somewhat used to this from making arrests in crowded street corner disturbances, but the fire men were not. "Why the hell are they mad at us. We're there to save lives." But it was also clear that in a larger framework of action, without knowing or being able confidently to predict how contagious the violence was or how mobile the incendiary elements might be, that the city was not about to send significant reserves into a hostile area

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and leave the rest of the city undefended. It was just as well. Had more cops been sent in there would certainly have been more violence, perhaps ~~more~~ deaths and shootings and someone would have been sure to say that the police had actually started the riots and that the firemen had set the fires. Although peace finally came back, the blackened builds stood for over a decade. No business would rebuild, no new housing would appear but the slow and tedious task would be taken up by thousands of individual heroes of evolving through millions of modest and humane social acts a community. There would be more riots and burnings and for a long time even to now, the Summer heat brings apprehension and worry to communities like North Lawndale in every city in the country.

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The next summer Dr. Martin Luther King came to Chicago having decided to move his crusade out of the south. It was a dumb decision. The black population in the North was both worse off and better off than the black population of the South. The urban social environment of the north was certainly more harsh and abrasive than the social environment of the South, especially on the children than the rural environment in which the largest number of black families lived in the South. The brutality of sudden change so much a part of ~~the~~ life in large cities, the impersonality of the social systems on which life depends, has a fiendish effect on poor people white or black as it grinds human flesh and psyches. Although cities set men free as Socrates observed a few thousand years ago -- they extract their price, in social disorganization, class discriminations jarring social contacts, a feeling at times of helplessness, powerlessness in a complicated world, even among people whose neighbors regard as solid substantial, prosperous.

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Since the Civil War a small but talented black population had been building a community with churches, politics, trades (draymen, barbering, canal workers, construction small business, catering) and in spite of conflict with competing ethnic neighborhoods, had constructed an effective skeleton of effective mediating institutions and relationship. Physically it moved from the loop area to make way for the new federal building and Post office south, later swelled by railroad workers porters and waiters and then by migrations of workers in the steel industry during world war one to form the famous Chicago Black Belt, twice it had reeled back on its heels by rushes of immigration, to fall back and then stagger on, building and even prospering.

The third rush of world war three ~~had~~ swamped it. But this time Federal programs Federal policies were to create conditions that were to upset the meager margins of stability on which progress had been building and undermine whatever control established institutions

(L. Sublette)

and youth of the established Churches some of the radical
bubbleheads in Dr. Kings entourage tried to enlist the
support of Black gangs like a Blackstone Rangers, a group
nobody saw much virtue in except the aspiring Pulitzer prize
writers at the Chicago Sun Times Daley News Marshal field
papers and Bobby Kennedys crime fighter agencies.

Fifty years of political experience had taught
the mayor not to turn his back on old friends in order
to make new ones (especially if you didn't know too
much about the new ones would turn out) was never confused.
He honestly wanted all the help he could get and promised
to cooperate with Dr. King if he came to Chicago and
brought about the biggest event of Dr. Kings Chicago
journey. A conference with all of the power makers and
shakers, cardinals bishops, business tycoons civic and
social leaders, everybody who was anybody as well as
a few who were nobodies. It was called hastily to be
sure but it was a big bust. Daley delivered to King
a group of people who had to give whatever Chicago had
to give and what he asked for a change of heart in

still retainedretained. This proud community was
 separated by fifty years in time from the South of
 Dr. King, jealous of its progress and power and felt
 quite superior to the segregated south. Northern leaders
 especially Black ministers, while mostly admiring of
 Dr. Kings work did not relish a messiah being thrust
 upon them to establish his own new power base, with his
 own evangelical purposes. Dr King did not get the warm
 reception he had anticipated. It was a situation the
 tensions of which were exacerbated by the fact that
 Chicago was the home of one of the alck worlds most
 powerful and conservative leader Jackson, not
 Jesse who had crossed swords both verbally and physically
 eith progressive southerner Martin Luther King in the
 babtist conference of which they both were members and
 of which Br. Jackson was the otherwise uncontested
~~leader~~ President and leader. His influence was great enough
 to dampen any fire among the gras goots of the Black
 religious estalishment for climbing on Dr. Kings fire
 engin. Rebuffed from access to the sunday schools

all of Chicago with the complete conversion of three and

a half million people to the human brotherhood. If

he'd asked Daley for 5000 jobs, ten judges and two

billions dollars in credits for community development

new franchises, new schools whatever --- that was

something Daley and his friends could have negotiated

but a change of heart ---- how the hell do you do that.

And it was clear that Dr. King had nothing in his

negotiation bag. He couldn't stop the threat of riots

and arson and looting that plagued the city and all

its citizens. He was there to shake the tree and see

what would fall off of it. Enough came out of it to save

face for Dr. King, the Mayor saw to that, and after a few

other pointless sorties Dr. King went home and to his *heroic and*

martyrdom. *And everyone else* Blacks got a National Holiday and Dr

Jackson changed the address of his Church from

Dr. Martin Luther King Parkway, (formerly South

Parkway) to the other street that forms the corner

on which his church is located, 33rd st.

Part of the problem confronted by Dr. King was the
the deep conviction that what the Blacks need is a
lot more of what the whites have. A bigger share of
that old gross national product. A larger hunk of the
pie. Movin on up to the big time. Nothing wrong with
that. 90% of both blacks and whites would agree. That's what
they need alright. In the black bars they also say
"We'd have it too if whity wouldn't discriminate us"
And in the white bars they say, "Niggers are too fuckin
dumb." In what passes for native wisdom they're both right.
Theb power of positive drinking.